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# CURRENT LITERATURE.

## BOOK REVIEWS.

### **Flowering plants and ferns.<sup>1</sup>**

MR. J. C. WILLIS has done a wise thing in organizing his manual in a single volume. It is a book of general reference for those interested in learning something of the plants they meet in a botanical garden or museum, or in the field. In this edition much new material has been incorporated, especially in connection with those subjects that have had large recent development. The range of subjects covered is extraordinary, for the book gives the outlines of morphology, physiology, ecology, classification, geographical distribution, and the economic uses of vascular plants, besides containing "a dictionary in which the whole of the families and the important genera of flowering plants and ferns are dealt with."

It would seem impossible for one man to present such a range of subjects with any uniformity. He is almost sure to enlarge those he knows best at the expense of those with which he is the least familiar. For example, in this volume, while the older morphology with its copious terminology has full swing, the modern morphology has a scant showing and is presented in such a way as to bring no clear conception to the uninstructed. The alternation of generations and the various important evolutionary lines can be apprehended clearly only as they are approached by way of the lower plants. We have never seen any special gain in including these subjects in a book for the general reader dealing only with the vascular plants. If the statements are understood, they are not exact; and if they are exact, they cannot be understood.

These subjects, however, are very minor matters in the book, while the treatment of geographical distribution, forms of vegetation, and plant associations is extended and full of information. Mr. Willis seems to be more than anything else an ecologist, and his contact with various plant conditions has been unusual. As a consequence, this part of this book has all the flavor of personal experience.

The larger part of the volume is devoted to the presentation of the "classes, cohorts, orders, and chief genera," and is unique in the alphabetical arrangement and in the amount and kind of information one can find about plants concerning which he may be curious.

The book will certainly be of great use as a reference book in providing that kind of information for which it really stands, and the only adverse criticism is directed against its claim to include great regions of botany for which it does not stand.—J. M. C..

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<sup>1</sup> WILLIS, J. C., A manual and dictionary of the flowering plants and ferns. Second edition, revised and rearranged in one volume. Cambridge Biological Series. Pp. xii + 670. Cambridge: The University Press. 1904.